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Colored

**A light shows the heart
The many colors you see
When gathered each part
The chosen one will be**

**The colors can't decide
What color to show
The task is too wide
The colors must grow**

**Each are the same
Yet different in hue
There is no blame
Each color will do**

**It's plain to see
When gathered each part
The beauty in the artist
Is the beauty in the art**

Helen Louise



"To the Sea"
Betsy Zibas

Under The Street Light

*A misty glow faintly luminous
Shines down under the street light
Where a bunch of kids play Run My Good Sheep Run.
Raucous, restless, active; they are a mosaic of movement
Rough and noisy, changing like a kaleidoscope
Tingling with excitement. Breathless from running.
Intent on winning.*

*Till one by one, they are called home.
The few who have no curfew, sit weary and
silent on the curb under the street light
While overhead the night hawks wheel and call
Circling in the dark and lonely sky.*

Connie Ware

La Classe de Francais

Fantastique!

Joie!

On apprend, on l'adore, on en jouit.

J'ecris ces mots parce que je suis fou.

Vrai.

French Class

Fantastic!

A Joy!

You learn, you love it, you enjoy it.

I write these words because I am crazy.

True.

Todd J. Monahan

The Interviewer and the Accused

Paul Nocifora

Interviewer:

His background,
well educated,
I found.

I think as we sit across each other in the bright room, at this
scarred table,
Carved with initials,
shining wood finish pockmarked,
like a scorned lover's mind,
by men and their cigarettes.

How could this polite smiling little man have done this?
Considering his demeanor I am really not able,
To think of him in that way, as a monster.

We sit at the table and he looks around,
at the bright lights,
soothing gray tile covering the walls and,
one way glass reflecting back at us,
hiding the voyeurs inside.

He laughs at the dumb jokes I tell him to calm him down.
Already calm.

Polite, Middle aged, sort of fat, but looking moral.
A too-wide tie, sort of floral
patterned.

Trying to provoke thoughts of spring.
Unremarkable in most ways.

Accused:

I know what you say I did.
Yes I knew the women.
As you did, in the mind.
With lust,

Voices from the Valley

I am quite distressed by the fact that they will not be around, again.

You say it was I who perpetrated these crimes.

That may be so.

I myself saw the signs,
on myself.

In the mirror that is the mind.

To enlighten you I would be free,
unbound,

but that is quite impossible to describe the darkness that
envelopes me.

Interviewer:

Darkness is all you know?

You were caught red-handed, delivering a blow,
with a smile on your face,

Like you grin now.

I may believe your story,
but the whole truth I must know.

Here I took a deep breath,
asked?

So?

Accused:

The darkness is the truth as much as I know.

As true as fallen snow,
in December.

The darkness is a feeling that has been around before.

When I am spurned,
mistreated
ridiculed.

This is when the feeling has come before.

It then pours,
as rain.

These women were all of the same kind.

Those who never came to help me, when I needed someone.

Sir, you can see the pattern, no?

These people treated me badly,

You must let me go.

What happened could not be helped.

You see,

It was the darkness that made me.

The darkness that envelopes me.

Interviewer:

It was at this point I took a break.

One could tell,

his thoughts were clear.

Not even a flinch at the pictures

that the fathers never see.

No remorse,

no regret.

It was this "darkness":

the exams will show are false, faked.

To stop the interview was all one could do.

Anger had taken hold.

To lie to me!

To stop was to prevent,

my beating that uncaring face into mush.

Then sitting with a smile.

Proclaiming to everyone who would hear or see,

I am not to be damned!,

It was this darkness that came over me.

Nana Rosalie
by Christopher John Arbisi

Scene: (Living room of Ema Rosalina Nymton)

In the center is a large, puffy chair decorated with violet and red roses. To its right stands a tall, golden floor lamp circa 1954. To the left of the chair sits a small, glass topped oak end table covered by the following items; a cup of espresso, a black vase containing a bouquet of dried red, violet and pink flowers, a photograph of a family, a King James Bible with a statuette of Mother Theresa on it adorned with a black rosary attached to a golden cross, a cap from a HagenDaz container, and a modern telephone. In front of the chair sits a glass topped oak coffee table with the following items on it; an ebony marble large statuette of a nude male torso, a deep purple jumbo family album with a dried lily holding a page, an autographed photo of Harry Connick Jr., a universal remote control, a double chocolate fudge mousse container of HagenDaz, an issue of Soap Opera Digest, and a small booklet of poetry.

Ema Nymton: ('Not My Name' backwards)

Rosalie is an Italian woman in her late sixties who came from the slums of Queens to the American dreams of Connecticut. The feisty mother of three and grandmother of six has black hair with several white streaks in it. The hair tops a head consisting of; Liz Taylor eyes capped by black glasses with wingtips adorned with gold, a Streisand nose points over very bright red thick lips. Large, tacky, opal, sphere earrings bob over heavily padded shoulders which are covered by a large maroon sweater containing a velvet painting of Elvis on it. Her gold, silver, black, and

white rings cover brightly painted fingers which often either clutch at her other rosary or tug at her tight black tights. Put all of this on top of deep purple pumps and you have Rosalie.

Action: (Being Rosalie)

At present Rosalie is talking to a very good friend on the phone, as she does several other things; she's also watching "Days of Our Lives" which is closed captioned so she can listen to her Harry Connick Jr. which plays softly. While she watches and listens, she digs like an animal through the quickly emptying container of HagenDaz as she occasionally sips her espresso. She speaks with Sophie about her "Days" and her Harry, and soon about a run in with a mutual acquaintance, that's when she notices the audience looking on. She ends the conversation and speaks to the audience nervously about herself, family, and especially her grandson, Michael.

"...I know dear, I know. My Ange, God rest that bastard's soul, he was the same way. Uh huh.. Yeah. I'm watchin 'Days' right now. That redhead dragon lady, Vivian is tryin to drug Kate. I swear if I could, I'd slap her. Mmm, me too. Lately I've had the social life of an antisocial slug, hermit crab, hibernating bear. Mmm Yeah, I said I was watchin. Ya don't hear it? Two words dear..Closed Captioned.. It's wonderful. I can listen to my Harry and watch John Black at the same time. I just bought Harry's new C.D. The boy is apparently sticking with his...funk. Too bad. I didn't get the captioning just to hear that sweetie, no. I figure when I get old and decrepit I'll keep my mind active by reading. Anyway, that's another thirty years or so. Oh! Funny story, you'll love it, it's about you. I'm walkin around the shoe department at Penny's and who do you think I ran

into? Hint, she was in my wedding. No. No. All right. Margaret Betrelli. I'm lyin I'm dyin, she was there in the flesh. Too much flesh if you ask me, a woman that old and big shouldn't be wearing a tube top and miniskirt. At any rate. What? I don't know, some tacky pumps. Remember, this is a woman who wouldn't know good taste if it took out her teeth and sang the score to 'Carousel.' She hadn't seen me yet, so I decide to play a gag on her. I walk beside her, pretending I'm a salesperson and says 'scuse me do you need any help with anything? She turns to me, looks me right in the eye and says, 'No, I'm just looking.' I know! I'm tappin on her back sayin 'Hello!?' Ya don't remember me? You were only at my wedding.' She gives me a closer look and says, 'Rosalie? Oh my God, I didn't recognize you.' Well, obviously R.K. didn't work for you. On the inside. On the outside I'm like, 'Oh it must be the hair or something.' We go on talkin and she goes, 'So what are you doin here?' 'What am I doin here? I'm gettin a papschmere. What the hell does it look like I'm doin?' 'Are you gettin gifts for your kids, or your grandkids?' 'Neither. You remember Sophie Cooglietta, my best friend?' 'Yeah' she says, ' isn't her daughter Valorie?' 'Yeah. Valorie's third anniversary's next week, so I decided to get a present early.' Well Sophie, that's when she gives me a look. Like I got the plague. I asked what was wrong, and she goes, 'Valorie's anniversary's wrong. All you had to say was Valorie, Rosalie.' I knew what she was getting at from the look. When she said all that I almost did something she might have regretted. But I stepped back and said, 'Look Mrs. Bryant, I know what you're trying to say. Who the hell are you to judge anyone, you geriatric jungle gym. Just because she's married to a.....OH MY GOD)!?"

"What? Oh nothing Sophie, about 50 people

savor every moment. Example. The twins were watchin cartoons, the Flintstones or somethin, while I was in the kitchen. Ya know how when the people get hit on the head, that big lump comes up? Apparently Antony and Joey wanted to know if it really worked. After they were talkin I hear in the den where Ange was, WHAM! Jesus Christ, what the hell are you doin? I run in and find that Joey hit Ange with a mallet. Savor every moment. The kids were basically all brothers and sisters. The twins and Ronnie always got into trouble, often caused by Joey and Antony, and watchin Gloria and Valorie was like watchin me and Sophie years earlier. Ronnie married and divorced and married again and Sophie has four grandkids from him.

Joey and Antony both married Italian Catholic women and had three kids. It was Ange's dream that his sons marry that kind before he died. Well, ya got what ya wanted Ange ya spoiled bajagaloo. The girls? Well, they went to grade and high school together. Gloria went one year in college, and Valorie...well I'd rather not talk about her right now. After her first year at college, Gloria met her future husband, Marcus Forrester. Marcus was an aspiring musical actor. You'd better underline, bold, circle, highlight, and star the 'as' in aspiring, cause that's just what he was. I always had a feeling that he was, and I guess it began a week before their wedding. Gloria pulls me aside and tells me that Marcus Forrester wasn't his real name. It was, and get this, Gino Garzoni. I know. I ask, 'Gloria, what's wrong with his God given name?' She said that Marcus thought that there were too many Italian names on the stage, he just wanted to make a different name for himself. I was like, sure, I understand perfectly. Mothers have dreams for their daughters. Some marry prosecuting attorneys, or doctors of philosophy, mine just happened to marry a dego in

appeared out of nowhere in my living room. Nursing home?! Go ta hell. Well, I'll put it this way, I have company and I'll have ta call you back later, ok? Now listen, I'll finish my story when I call you back. You'll love it. I put that old bat in her place. And I'll make sure that Michael gets Valorie's message. All right dear. I love ya, bye-bye....Oh my God, how did you all get in my living room..which is no longer my living room, I'd remember these lights. I guess how you got here isn't important. What's important is that you are here, and I'm here and we're all here. And like the good hostess I am, I guess I'll introduce myself. I'm Ema Rosalina Nymton, but you can just call me Rosalie. To any one who calls me Ema Nymton I say 'It's not my name backwards. Write it down you'll find out.' I guess you even heard my phone conversation too. Oh well. Sophie Cooglietta has been my best friend from the womb. I kid you not. In Queens we grew up across the hall from each other. We were practically sisters and did everything together. We went to grade school and high school together. She got married first..Bitch. Salamoni Cooglietta was a successful real estate agent. Please. In Queens that was almost impossible. I was in the wedding, but a year later she was in mine. I married an owner of a pizza joint, Angelo, God rest that bastard's soul wherever it may be, and we moved to Connecticut where I had my twins. During my nine, who do you think moves in across the street expecting their own? Well, when I had Joey and Antony, Sophie was having Ronnie. Things were great for a year and even better the next. I swear that Sal and Ang must have gotten together at the tracks and planned everything out, cuz the next year was when I had my Gloria and Sophie had her Valorie. Coincidence? I think not. Oh they grow up so fast, and that's why you try to

denial, what can I say. At any rate, they moved to uptown Manhattan where they had their only son Michael. A wonderful grandson. I still felt I was right about his father, and my thoughts were proven to be true. Gloria called me one day, and I swear it was like some sort of clairvoyant, telepathic, psychic friends hotline thing goin on cause the first words that came out of her mouth were, 'Ma, I think Marcus, Gino, CYBIL, whatever the hell his name is, is having an affair.' I was like, what was your first clue? The bottle of Channel number five in your vanity that wasn't yours, or was it when you went to one of his shows that he had the lead in and he wasn't there. On the inside. On the outside I was like, tell mama all about it. Seems that he was havin an affair. He'd call and say that rehearsals were running late and he'd have to stay the night at a hotel. As if.

Sometimes he wouldn't show up for rehearsal at all. He'd go down to a local topless dance bar where he met his future mattress, I mean mistress. Her name? On my kids lives, Mammalia Mahalia. When Gloria told me I said, I was hungry dear. I ran into the vamp and tramp about a month ago..alright, I was stalking them, a mother can do those things. When I got a look at her I almost joined my Ange, God rest that bastard's soul. All I have to say is Mymalia, Myhalia, Myass. She shoulda been called Silicone Cecilia. I was surprised she didn't have some kinda major spinal injury or something.

Those things coulda put Muller Pinehurst and Dean foods out of business. I swear it coulda been some kinda mammary monopoly. Do not pass go. Do not collect two-hundred dollars. Go directly to Baywatch. Now Gloria and Michael have moved back to Connecticut. Gloria's working for the school board, Michael's going to a local arts col-

lege and I'm fine, but fiending for a cigarette, thank you very much. Honestly though. Oh, my movies are on. TBS usually has very good movies about now. Movies for men who love movies. Well if it has that Jean Claud Jingle Himer guy, guess it's time for a sex change. Now what's this? Need my glasses. Doctor says I need 'em for my lis-dexia. Whatever. Huh? Must be a Bond movie. 007 Bulc. Odd. Who's that scary man? He must be the bad guy. My God he looks like the Devil. Now what's he sayin? Caption. Somethin about AIDS bein the hammer in the gun of the homosexual movement. What? Well...What the? This ain't Bond, I'm watchin the 700 Club. My God, that's Pat Robertson. I can't stand those kind of people. 'You're evil, you're evil, you're evil.. Please, we're all going to hell. I'll tell ya the perfect example of that type, Margaret Betrelli. Better yet, I'll kill two birds with one stone and tell you about her and her problem with Valorie. See, Valorie isn't married to a man. No, she and her partner, Pam have been together for three years now and her mother, my best friend, Sophie, couldn't be happier. Yes she still loves her and she doesn't put up with anyone bad-mouthing her daughter. Like Margaret. How could I describe her. Well, imagine Anita Bryant, late seventies, Pat Robertson, now, and a mid eighties Tammy Baker, and put them in one big, unattractive body. When she found out about Valorie she just had to ask Sophie to make sure, and I just loved the response she gave her. Magaret asks, 'Isn't you're daughter lesbian?' And Sophie says, 'No, my daughter's Valorie.' Oh, I laughed, I laughed. I figure if she can love Valorie, I can love my grandson. Yes, Michael is gay, and if anyone has a problem with it, they'll have to go through me, and I'll put 'em on their asses. Gettin back to Margaret and people like

her, she asked me a question that some people ask. After the gossip gorilla found out about Michael she asks me, 'Now Rosalie, how did Gloria take it?' I actually thought about that. How did Gloria take it? 'Well Margaret, Gloria took it WITH CREAM! How the hell do ya think she took it.' The woman has the IQ of paprika. She didn't take it too well I'll tell ya that much. I'll never forget the day she told me. I was sittin at home watchin MTV. Go ta hell. See, I might look like I'm in my late thirties.

That doesn't mean I'm not down with that. I watch Jams, and Singled Out. But that Bevis and Butthead, I'm not too sure about. Who honestly spends all day eatin and insulting television? Cindy Crawford in another Pepsi commercial, who'da ever thought. Wait till menopause twit. Anyway. I think I was watchin one of the Real Worlds. Maybe the one with that boy from The Grind. Not that I ever watched it. Besides, I was waiting for my own entertainment. I was in a very sultry teddy, something I picked up in a Frederick's, I think, waiting for the UPS man to stop by. The doorbell rang and I answered. Getting into a pose I saw on Melrose Place, I said in a deep sexy voice, 'That's one helluva package you've got there.' Instead of the continuing foreplay I hear.. 'Oh my God Ma what are ya doin in that thing?!' It was my daughter, Gloria. Out of all days to visit she picks that one. Embarrassed, I invite her in and put on my robe. She sits down with me and we talk about this and that. Things are fine until I see that worried look in her eye. She starts actin strange like there's something wrong. I ask her if there is and she lies with a lot of pain in her voice. I ask, 'Are ya sure? Ya wanna talk about it?' She goes, 'No really ma I'm fine, let's just talk about somethin else.' She was always one for melodrama. I go, 'Sure hun, I tell ya this rash under my

left breast has got to be at least two inches long. I've tried takin cream..’ That’s when she jumps in. ‘All right, all right ma, I’ll tell ya.’ She starts gettin emotional. ‘It’s about Michael.’ Almost breakin out into tears myself, I ask her if I can get her something before she goes on. ‘Sure ma, some coffee.’ ‘I’ll get ya some espresso.’ She looks at me like I’ve crossed over. ‘Ma? Espresso?!’ I tell her, ‘Do ya always need coffee during every crisis. Get with the 90’s dear.’ So she takes the espresso and I ask her what’s wrong with Michael. She takes a sip and gets a hold of herself. “It was last week some time, during one of St. Ben’s four day weekends. Michael wanted to know if his good friend Ian Alexander, nice boy, could spend the week-end with us. I saw no problem with it, so I agreed. That Sunday I got a call from work sayin that there was a meeting Monday morning. The next day I check in with the boys to let them know that I was leavin.” She breaks off into a sob and says, “They were in bed together.” I said, ‘So’, and she said, “No Ma, they were naked and holding each other.” She broke off again and I go, “So you’re sayin that you think Michael is gay?” “I’m sayin I know for a fact. A couple days ago he came out to me. He said that he never wanted to tell me because he was afraid no one would love him.

Ma, he was so afraid that he tried to end his life once before. He said if it wasn’t for Ian’s love, he’d have done it.” She took a couple of deep breaths, sipped her espresso, I felt like I was watchin a Lifetime special movie. “Tried to end his life Ma, cause he thought I’d stop lovin him.” I broke in. “Lemme ask ya somethin Gloria. do ya love your son?” Again there went the look. “Do I love him? Ma, that’s a stupid question.” “No dear, a stupid question would be, Is Jim Jones the poster boy for Kool Aid? This is

a valid question. Do ya love your son?" And ya know what? She actually thought about it. "Of course I do ma. At first I hated the idea that my flesh and blood, my boy, could... love another man. But now I tolerate it as much as I can." That's when I snapped. "Lemme ask ya another stupid question Gloria. Are you my daughter?" She gives me the nuts look. "Didn't you listen to me when you were a child? I said you either accept someone for who they are, or have nothin to do with 'em. You don't insult them by 'tolerating' them, especially not your own flesh and blood. He's not a stranger, or some other woman's kid, he's yours. Dear, the love he's getting from Ian is what probably kept him from...killing himself before. But the love he gets from you will keep him alive a hell of a lot longer than anyone else's." Gloria wasn't always the smartest person. Maybe if she set her hair higher she could catch those low flying messages. She looks at me puzzled and goes, "I know ma. I just don't know what to do." "Ya know what ya do? Ya go home to Michael and tell him you love him. Then you go to Ian and you give that sweetheart one hell of a bear-hug." We talk for quite a while longer, and soon she asks me another question. "Ma, how the hell did you get to be so understanding about stuff like this?" I look at her. "I'll tell ya, but ya gotta promise not to have a heart attack or somethin." She nods. "Two words Gloria, Valorie Cooglietta." Jaw in the coffee table, she goes, "Oh my God Ma. We were like sisters. We did everything together" I look at her shakin my head. "Obviously not everything, or you wouldn't have married that bi-polar yutz." I give her a big hug and send her on her way. A week or so later I get another visitor. I was sittin watchin television, I think one of those talk shows. Ricki, or Sally, was havin a show on transsexual-

homosexual-oriental-sheep farming-Jewish-ex-cons. I was also wearin another nice Frederick's piece that I got from the U.P.S. man the week before. Let me just say that Springer coulda had a field-day with that one. And again I was expectin company.

This time the Rotor Rooter man was stoppin by. Don't get me wrong, I'm not a tramp. I can't help if I've got good genes. Do I let anything come in between me and my Calvin's? Depends. Anyway, the doorbell wrung and I get myself all ready. This time I use a pose I got from a Susan Lucci NBC movie as I open the door and say, "Come to check my pipes?" A moment later I hear, "Ya know Nana, if I've come at a bad time..." It was my grandson, Michael. There I was, standing there in my edible Teddy in front of my grandson. I quickly covered myself up and invited him in. Of all days for that one to come and visit, he had to visit on that one. Well, he came in as my face stopped turning colors and sat down. I asked him what was new and he told me that a lot of things were. I could tell he was a bit nervous, cause he wrung his hands just like his mother did whenever she was upset about something. So, with a hint of Carol Brady I ask, "Is there something bothering you, Michael?" He looks at me and says, "Well, Nana, there actually is and I'd like to talk to you about it." Well, I was surprised. Finally, someone with enough common sense to tell someone that there was something wrong. I tell him that we'll talk about it as soon as he has some of his favorite pasta. Out of nowhere he says, "Nana, you can't solve every problem with pasta." Another shock. I'm like ok, so we won't have pasta. He says, "No Nana. I said you can't solve every problem with pasta. I didn't say I didn't want any." Oh that boy cracks me up. Wonder where he gets that sense of humor? Well, I make him some pasta

and a wonderful cake I got from a Martha Stewart program. I swear that woman can do anything. I wouldn't be surprised if on her next show she'd be making a time machine. Course she'd have some sort of dry floral arrangement to go along with it. At any rate, we talk for a little bit and I finally ask, "What's troubling you dear." He looks up at me with those baby-blues and says, "Nana, you'd better fix some espresso." Espresso?! My God it had to be bad for that. Five minutes later, it was instant, we were sitting in the den as he went on. "Nana, there's something I have to tell you, and I'm not too sure if you're gonna like it. Nana, I'm gay." He braced himself as if I were pointing a semi-automatic rifle at his bezedies. When I didn't respond he went on. "I've had a relationship with Ian Alexander for about a year now, he said he loved me and I think I love him. I told ma about a couple weeks ago. She acts like she's ok with it, but I'm not sure. I hope you're ok with it."

After he stopped, I said, "Michael, I can't say that I'm very happy about this." Before I get a chance to go on, he looks down with disappointment. "Not about the 'gay thing,' Michael. I don't care if you're blind, blue, or broke. You're my grandson, and I love you. I'm not happy with the idea that you never chose to share this part of your life with those who love you." "Well, Nana, it was a personal part of my life that I was afraid to share with anyone, especially my family. I was afraid I'd lose their love." I stopped him. I was his grandmother, not some high school fair weather friend that was about to turn into a lunch hour shrink. "Dear, you and your mother both need a violinist following you around each time you talk about your heart attack, disaster horror stories. Life is not a movie of the week, so stop treating it like it is. God knows it would be

nice if commercials were to interrupt every so often, but they don't. Your mother went out on ya last week to me." He looks at me strangely. "You mean outed me." "Inned ya, outed ya, throughed ya whatever. The point is is that you're not the only person who's ever gone through this, so don't feel special. It seems to me that you actually doubt your family's love for ya." He looks at me and flatly goes, "No. I doubt my love for myself. Obviously Ian was the first person I came out to that could understand me. I came out to a couple of other people that said they were my friends, but a few weeks after, they became more and more distant until I lost them completely. For the longest time I thought it was my fault. That's why I tried to kill myself. I couldn't take the thought I was hurting those I cared about." I was starting to understand him now, so I slipped in. "Michael, as strange as it may sound, I think I know what you're talkin about, not first hand, but just listen for a bit. I'm gonna tell ya a coupla things that a very dear friend told me. Never be tolerated by anyone, and nothing is better left unsaid. I'll explain. Those people you came out to already had it in their heads that all gays should be put on an island and bop each other to death. But you didn't think about that. You wanted someone, anyone to just be there so bad that you would do almost anything to keep their 'friendship'. Later on, they made it clear that they didn't like the choice you made, and they were starting to drift. You figured that if you either ignored that thing they didn't like, or hate it yourself, they'd like you again. Am I gettin close?" His eyes were like hockey pucks as he nodded and I went on. 'Well dear, they weren't accepting you.

They were tolerating you just because you were in love with another young man. As far as this old...older lady's concerned, tolerating is no better than insulting.

You're sexuality is a gift from God, be you bi, homo, or hetero. They were tolerating that gift of yours, and to me, they were insulting it. Insulting a gift from God is a far worse sin than any excuse that some Marjoret Batrellie can condemn.' 'Who?' 'Never mind. Because you were trying to ignore and hate this thing about yourself, which in my opinion is a sin too. (I only read the Bible like the best selling book it was meant to be) You kept all those feelings inside. I'll bet there was so much that you wanted to say but couldn't because you were afraid of the consequence to others, and especially yourself, am I right?' He nodded his head like it was gonna fall off. 'You thought those things were better left unsaid. Sweetheart, nothing is better left unsaid, no matter what it is. Silence brings regret, regret brings pain. Ooo, I've gotta get a copyright on that.' Those two mistakes lead you to the other mistake of trying to end your life. Let me tell ya somethin. Out of all the selfish things you can do, taking your own life just because you can't deal with it is the ultimate selfish act. You are loved by others Michael, but all the love in the world can't save you if you don't have any for yourself.' I was done with my sermon. Dr. Joyce Brothers eat your heart out. We spoke for a while longer about his college plans and his plans with Ian. That's when I became Dr. Ruth. 'The two of you are careful aren't you?' 'I'll tell ya somethin Nana, aside from everything St. Ben's took from me; my faith and love in myself and others to name a couple, it shaped my respect of my...virtue.' I was surprised and proud. 'Besides' he says, 'you're the one who looks like she's in her mid40's. I plan to be around for a long time, and that's partly your fault now.' 'Oh Michael....That's late thirties. And I love you.' My wonderful grandson looks up at me and smiles. 'I love you too...Nana Rosalie."



“Mother”
Bryan Wobig

Moon glow kiss
In the starry night
Radiant love
Sweet delight.

Diamond constellations-the beds of gods
A path of ruby lip gem roses
Gliding through glittering light
The end of time.

Waiting
for the white heat
of the rising sun-
A shining dragon of desires.

Moon glow kiss
Flying on the wings of light
Vivid memories
Replaying in tangibility
Fleshy holograms of reality
Soon to come again-never fading
The fever red passion
For no other
Reuniting inevitably
Lasting dimensional fantasies.

Janelle Ciaccio

Untouchable Father

**Brooding man whose separate life never converged with mine.
"Great guy who loves a laugh, always there to lend a hand"-
the one I never touched.**

**Do I make you proud? Did I then, when I was ten?
That-a-girl I never heard.**

**Your laughter arrived with visitors, that ever-transient
personality would come to life if only momentarily.
Untouchable father whose thoughts, ambitions,
feelings, were unknown to me,
and mine to you.**

**Nervous strangers, you and I. Empty conversations
created darting eyes that searched for an escape-
from me.**

Mom distracted our tension temporarily.

**Mistakes are clear in an old man's mind. Without warning
your eyes reflect my worth. If only I had known you
were blind for a time. Your handicap-
not mine.**

**Overdue affection cannot spontaneously change a heart
long denied. Time consumed by guilt leaves none for
transformation. Poor judgement provides a message
learn from it,
grow from it,
create change from it,
or accept yourself as an
untouchable father.**

Phyllis Ann West

PAPAYA DREAMS

*The moment was passion fruit
The nectar was sweet
And dripped through my whole body.
The connection was perfect
Lock and key.
The image as long as a candle dripping wax in time.
Skin interwoven by the night parade.
It was like a drug
I just kept wanting more.
A taste, a binge,
A surrender to beauty.
It's like we were making music
But with no words.
Just erotic sounds
And a body language
Of a new lesson I haven't begun to learn.*

Josh Martin

D.U.I.

The sun is smothered by the trees,
As the day is laid to rest.
The will that's left inside of me
Gets weaker with each breath.
The familiar taste within my throat,
Now trickles from my nose.
My back is broke, my body's cold,
I can no longer feel my toes.

I wish I would have listened
To the wisdom of my peers.
The words of their advice
Still echoes in my ears.
But as I fade away,
I can't help myself but think,
I could be safe at home by now,
If I had decided not to drink.

Eric Wright

*Love swam away
from a shattered glass ship
upon an ocean of salty tears.
In the dark watery tomb
she sulked in her losses
feeling the universe
spinning away, beyond sensation
soaking alone.*

*She lamented her own sorrows
for no one else would.
How was she to live,
endure such torment-
the void deepening
engulfing her on her endless fall.*

*In the deafening silence
came a soft whisper-
“I love you”
and the heavenly abyss
consumed her until she no longer existed.*

Janelle Ciaccio

The Contest

Connie Ware

Elmer's garden was as tidy as a living room. It was small, enclosed with railroad ties and heavily mulched between plants, and the few weeds that managed to sprout were hurried off to his compost pile. He was proud of the amount of food he could raise in this small space, but this year he would only grow flowers.

It was 1945 and the Burpee Seed Co., was offering a \$10,000 prize to anyone who could grow a white marigold. So Elmer sent for two packages of their light colored marigolds believed to contain a white gene.

Planting the seed was easy in the loose, well dug soil and the little seeds came up readily in the spaced green rows. Elmer had a little pointed hoe he used between plants and he watered everyday that it did not rain so his care brought great results. The plants grew lush and taller than normal and he could hardly wait for the buds to show color.

The first marigold to bloom was pale yellow, a disappointment as he had seen many of that color, however, a fat bud on a neighboring plant showed pure white, it would bloom the next day and in his dreams that night, Elmer saw the budding marigold as big as a cabbage and white

as a gardenia.

He forced himself to linger over his coffee the following morning, waiting until the sun warmed the garden and opened the sun-loving flowers but from the kitchen window, he could see a large white flower among the yellow marigolds. He just couldn't wait and excitedly ran out the back door to see he had grown a pure white marigold, not only large and ruffled, but without the unpleasant marigold odor.

He was ecstatic, ran in for the camera, took six or eight pictures of the precious plant and as soon as they were developed, sent them to the Burpee Seed Co.

It took nine anxious days to get a reply. Yes, his flower showed great promise said the letter and explained how he should allow the flower to mature; to seed, be harvested and sent by insured parcel post, all of which he did and after a few anxious weeks of mail watching, finally rather dejectedly, put the whole thing out of his mind.

On a snowy February morning, Elmer opened his mail box to find a letter from Burpee with a window showing it was a check! He'd won! With trembling hands, he opened it and saw the amount \$59.88.

He and another 166 winners shared the ten thousand dollar prize for Man-In-The-Moon Marigolds.

The Last Dream

I'm lost.

**Somewhere in this neighborhood
is my house, whitely glowing,
but just when I think
I know where I am,
the streets get all skewed and screwy on me,
and all the colors of the houses,
reds and blues and greens,
bleed into the gutters.**

**I run down the alleyway where
I once blissfully popped tar bubbles
with bare feet, down to Donnie's house,
the boy with blue eyes and white-blond hair.**

**His mother guards the door.
She gets one look
at my yellow skin,
my slanted eyes
and tells me he's not there.**

**Only I know he is, but I can't speak.
Her eyes turn black and opaque
And fall to the ground
like broken dead birds
that will never sing again
and I see through them, I see
that I am dead, too,
and I can't get away
fast enough,
flying
through
the gray
trees.**

Carrie Nelson



“Revolutionary”
Betsy Zibus

SUICIDAL TEARS

*If we didn't have TV would more people believe in a god?
Teen suicide rate increases with each first breath
Taken by babies in the delivery room.
Mothers weep and think about
All the things they could have done
To save a life that now exists in photo albums
And baby shoes in the bottom drawer.
How innocent,
How porcelain you were.
How they would make sure you had good decent friends
So you wouldn't fall into categories of losers,
Or cheap painters set up all along the industrialized highway.
They had big dreams for you
Of lawyers, doctors or Miss Susie Homemaker.
Having families, supporting cribs,
Excellent caviar.
But what happened?
You ended it all because they were wrong.
All their visions,
All their cotton candy dreams
Flushed down the greasy diner toilet.
The loss of love and future threads
That made up your coat of Father Time.
The bed made by Mother Nature
With all the tears you shed,
Your first look at this cruel world.
You just cut the chains wrapped around destiny
And swam away
To the Dead Sea.*

Josh Martin

The Ride

The spinning, swirling, dizzying dazzlement
of the midway
reflected in the shining eyes and
flashing teeth of a million
too-happy people

The hypnotic blend of sensations,
a cacophony of sights, sounds, smells
overwhelm the mind
transporting thought to a nether-realm
of simple action and reaction

The tiny car on the huge circle
rocks and sways
as the world jerks into motion

Creaking like an aging ogre
gravity is defied
the people below begin to resemble
swarming ants

Suddenly, when a minute pinpoint of light
represents the whole universe,
all movement stops

From nowhere, a whirlwind sends the orchestrated frenzy
below into a
chaotic maelstrom that ceases to exist
the moment before it was born

All that defined life as such
disappears into an infinite nothingness
and that tiny car is freefalling into oblivion

Screams are never heard,
absorbed by a blackness
bounded only by eternity

The point of utter panic, however,
waits until the realization dawns
that the void is not outside, external
it is within,
and the freefall will only end
when our soul has been consumed
by our fear.

Acquisition

*I once had you beside me
for many nights
but I had to
extract the words
from your mouth
gather their importance
from your eyes
pick out the words
and expressions myself
sometimes wishing to say
and feel them as well
“I hope we can still be friends”
Your voice
thin and wispy
like a candle
in a blackout
but my racing heart
drowned
out the sound
though I still try
I can no longer
remember your eyes
it is so hard
at night
to believe
in any color
but sky*

Betsy Zibas

“Happy Birthday Soldier”

I'll never forget my 18th birthday in the dark, cold, wet and miserable night staring into the eyes of the Eagle. Saturated in my brothers blood and our sweat and tears, we are living our worst fears. Even though we hang in there together, the Eagle begins losing it's feathers. When I could take no more, I finally cried. And now the eagle can no longer fly. About half an hour before assistance arrived, my brother had already died. I'll never forget his last words “Happy Birthday Soldier.” We could see the medics, the fog was too thick, they couldn't land. We had freedom in the palm of our hands. I wasn't sure what I was gonna do. The choppers finally landed, and that's when the Eagle flew. I'm home now still in the Army, so I know I won't stay. Wherever I go I'll never forget my 18th birthday. Every night I have a hard time sleeping. All of the screams and explosions keep me awake. What was my present? Where was my birthday cake?

This poem is based on a true experience.

Jeremy Fox

Diogenes

As I shine this lantern
its light itself escapes.

Dieter Zeschke

The Beyond

We are so far beyond the great beyond and yet we haven't even begun.
So much we haven't seen, touched, tasted.
I barely know you by your face
I think as I feel our souls begin to mesh.
And I wonder, does this make me a psychological whore?
Waiting for my catharsis as I fly away from the broken cocoon of my life three weeks ago.
Those days when I shaved my legs to be sexy and wore my hair down to be girly.
Those days when I wrote about what I wanted to be, what was caged up inside of me, what I am becoming.
And when I think of my fingernails ripping your flesh and making it bleed or biology class, I feel extremely satisfied with where I am.
I know I'm sick, but isn't that o.k. if it keeps me calm enough for you to tame?
Picking at the dead flesh of my cuticles is calming.
So what if I only say things sometimes for sex appeal?
So what if I read the road map upside down?
So what if I grab your cock just to see the look on your face?
Politics bore me, I just want to see you cry.
I just want to find a way out of this latex suit I'm wearing.
I just want to feel the air touching me as you walk away.

KElly Stolgren

Inferno of Kassel, Germany

How My Native Town Was Destroyed by Allied Air-Raid, October 22nd, 1943

Val Sudmeyer

I was born and raised in Kassel, a town which had about 200,000 inhabitants at that time. It is located in the state of Hesse, right in the middle of Germany, on the Fulda River. The city of Kassel was virtually obliterated by allied bombings during World War II. More than 60,000 people died overnight on October 22, 1943. Developed over centuries, the town of Kassel was destroyed within fifty minutes. When the war ended, only one fifth of the buildings were left. One third of the inhabitants still lived in the basements of ruins or rough-and-readily mended houses.

It was a day as any other during World War II. Once or twice during the night one had to get out of bed and go down to the air-raid shelter in the basement. You were lucky if it didn't last longer than an hour or two, until - - what a relief each time (!) - - the "all-clear" signal was given and you could go back to sleep. During the first years of the war, only a few bombs had been dropped on Kassel. Several houses were destroyed in our city. But the normal routine of everyday life had continued smoothly until October 22, 1943.

From that day on everything changed. The war was no longer going on just somewhere in Poland, France or Russia. Now we were in the midst of it. Our lives changed drastically, and were moved in a direction we could not foresee or control.

Students who are not too fond of going to school sometimes make jokes about how it would be if their school would burn down. That day my school - - and not only the school - - literally did burn down. The events of

that day altered my evaluation of school and my appreciation of those ordinary routines that make up everyday life.

I was sixteen years old at that time. Neither was I a model pupil nor did my orderliness reach up to my mother's standards, but I was happy and felt secure. We lived still an orderly, well organized life, relatively untouched by troubles and disturbances of the war. After I had been in school that morning, I spent the afternoon at home looking forward to a theatre presentation of "Stella", a drama by Goethe, scheduled to be performed in the evening. I only had to walk about ten minutes to the theatre. The play started precisely at eight.

The beginning scenes were not yet over when the shrill warning signal of sirens made the audience rise and push toward the exit doors. Unfortunately, the show had to be interrupted: too bad, but nothing unusual. The visitors either returned home or went to the next official air-raid shelter. No panic or flurry. . . It happened every day, sometimes more than once a day, and several times during the night. We were used to it.

I was disappointed that I did not get to see the show. On my way home, I still hoped the air-raid alarm might be over soon enough, so that after the 'all-clear' signal, the play would be continued. When I got home, I heard voices from the dining room. I opened the door and saw the table set for our night meal.

A few details have to be explained, so that the reader can understand what happened that evening when I came home from the canceled theatre performance. Living space was rationed in Germany during the war, just as food, clothing, gasoline and all kinds of consumer goods. Since our apartment had more room than a family of three was allowed to occupy, we had to take in an involuntary subtenant.

Voices from the Valley

A man in his forties, Heini Koch, was assigned to us as a "billed soldier". He was not a real soldier, but a musician who had been drafted into the army to serve as drummer in a military band. We had gotten to know him quite well; we liked him, and he cared for our family as well. We used to share good and bad things. I enjoyed watching him when his band played on weekends in the park. I was proud when he smiled at me, and I could tell my classmates: "Look, the drummer! His name is Heini Koch, and I know him well!"

Obviously, he was glad to have not only a place to stay, but a home. Once in a while we shared our meals. My father had died in 1930, when I was three years old. Heini Koch and his family belonged to a younger generation, but we were concerned about his wife and children, and liked to hear him talk about them. It felt good to have him around as a friendly, protective father figure, and he must have felt some kind of responsibility for us.

Since the beginning of the war, the German population was warned by broadcast as soon as allied air-planes approached. Even more detailed information was circulated by wireless among the military. From those sources, Heini kept us informed about the routes which bombers were flying, and where they anticipated attacks. This particular evening, at about the time I went to the theatre, he had been listening to those top secret radio broadcasts. The information he brought home was that allied planes were flying in another direction, passing by our area. He said, "We don't have to go to the shelter tonight. The alarm will be over pretty soon." I hoped he was right and marveled, "Then the theatre performance can be continued after the alarm is over!"

Heini Koch had brought home one of those breads baked especially for the army, called

"Kommisbrot", and he offered to share not only this, but also a rare, dried, old sausage. What precious treats these were at that time is hard to explain to today's well-fed readers. Heini holds his sausage in one hand, in the other a knife to cut it into two pieces. My mother grasps the other end which shall be ours. Exactly when the knife touches the sausage, the room is suddenly lighter than sunlight.

I run in shock to the window, and hastily push it open. From our apartment on the fourth floor, we can overlook the lower houses. The view is open across the roofs of the city toward the tower of the townhall. Everything glistens in bright greenish light, allowing all details to be seen clear as crystal. Signal rockets, more than I can count, are hanging, held in place by parachutes, over the city. I know what this means. The fluorescent fireballs are supposed to mark the targets for bombing. I am paralyzed, fascinated by this strangely impressive illumination, frozen in shock for a moment.

When the first bomb explosion shatters the air, I'm quickly thrown out of my rigid position. Trembling all over, I run into the hallway of our apartment, grab a coat from the hook and that little blue suitcase, prepared in case of emergency, always ready there close to the entrance door. Strangely enough, in sentimental attachment from childhood days, I used to take my teddy bear down into the shelter during air raid alarms. On Oct. 22nd, 1943 -- I don't take him with me. And now, when I remember the ordeal of that day, I think instead of the teddy bear, I should rather have tried to rescue our budgerigar, the yellow-green lovebird, which must have died that night -- imprisoned in its cage -- miserably in the midst of smoke and flames. This was the day my hometown, Kassel, was destroyed.

In order to get into our air raid shelter, we have to

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climb down in a hurry: three staircases, each with at least thirty steps, then another flight of stairs, even steeper, leading into the basement. I stumble, run, stumble again . . . panic! . . . somehow I make it.. When I finally arrive at the door of the air raid shelter, I look around, and with a sigh of relief - - yes, my mother and my sister have made it too. There is Heini, our drummer, and three families, who live in the house along with us.

The first explosions had already ripped the air and shaken the earth while we were on our way down. These must have been so-called air mines, which explode in the air before touching the ground, while the explosion of normal bombs is caused by impact. Air mines seldom failed. Each and every one exploded, and brought forth a wave of air pressure that shattered all the windows in the area.

Even before we had reached the air-raid shelter, one blow after the other making the walls and the ground floor of our basement shake. The blast of each explosion is painfully felt in the ears. One is supposed to swallow, otherwise the eardrum might burst. I keep swallowing as often as I can. We huddle together, as sheep might crowd and press against each other when they are terrified by a violent storm, thunder, and lightning. My mother holds my sister's and my hand, pressing them hard, while we hear the bombs whistling as they come down.

Each time we hear the explosion, we realize: this one did not hit us. But detonations come closer and closer. The ground vibrates even more vigorously, chunks of plaster are falling down from the ceiling, and a fine dust of chalk or lime fills the air. I try not to breathe. All senses are alert. Air growing rich in carbon dioxide with less and less oxygen develops a certain smell: stale, dry, exhausted, sickening, disgusting. But I find

out, I have to breathe. I become dizzy when I try to hold my breath.

I develop a new ability to hear. I hear the engines of approaching airplanes roaring far away, then coming closer, the murderous whistling rush of falling bombs. I know exactly when to expect the burst of the explosion, fear it, crawl into myself, close to my mother and my sister, bend, twisted, all of us curved..., everyone crumpled, crunched. Is there anything on earth to be compared with this? An earthquake, maybe - but that is a natural phenomenon, not unleashed by human hostility.

The attacking airplanes come in waves. Each time, when one wave is gone, there is an instant of hope: maybe it's over now! . . . No, it isn't . . . Still another wave . . . This is probably what happened in Hamburg, where, two days ago, the center of the city had been totally destroyed. Only recently the word 'Bombenteppich' (carpet of bombs) came up. What will be left . . . after this 'carpet bombing'? With one of the most heavy detonations, the light goes out . . . darkness, dust on my tongue. Will we be buried alive? Could I only creep into the ground, hear no more airplanes come, unloading their murderous burden and move away, only to give room for a new wave to come, a new hell to crack open, another grave to be torn up! But I want no grave. My will to live is strong. So much still to look forward to, to hope for and expect. So much never experienced. In the face of danger, my senses rise to utmost awareness. . . . still ahead.

Images and thoughts flare up and pass through my mind. I try to imagine how they look, those young pilots, pointing their weapons toward us, each one with a family of his own at home(?). How can they do this? . . . unleash such a hell?! In my imagination I see their

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faces, helmets on their heads. What do they feel? Can they feel at all?

One day, if I survive, one day, when this dreadful war is over, I might see the country from where they come. (I could not know that the attacking bombers were British, not American.) A picture of Niagara Falls that I had seen in school flashes through my mind. I want to see this sometime. If only I will get out of this shelter, out of this war. Maybe then I will have a son one day. He might fly an airplane. But I don't want him to drop bombs. Between waves of airplanes and explosions, the only stammering prayer I can think of is: "Oh, Lord! Let this be over! Let it end! Let us live!" And we stayed alive.

The attack ended after about fifty minutes, but it felt as if it had raged for hours. We had lost all sense of time. There were short intervals between waves of bombers. It felt as if hours had passed. When finally there was silence, it was hard to believe. - - - They might come back?! - - - At least now, there was silence. But - - what nobody could have imagined - - The real ordeal is still ahead of us.

More and more people are coming into our basement. When the bombing began, there had been no more than eleven of us in the shelter. For reasons of air raid precautions, by law of local authorities, openings had been broken into the fireproof walls between the buildings, connecting the basements of all the houses on a street. This way, in case of emergency, people were not trapped, shut in within their own basements, but could move along, until they found a way into the open from emergency exits of one of the other houses. This escape route had come into use after the bombing had stopped. Some houses in our neighborhood had been blown up by explosive bombs, others - - in fact all

of them, more or less, - - were on fire. All the people from our street who lived in houses to the left of ours suddenly appeared in our air-raid shelter. They could not move on in the same direction because the bank next-door had its safe in this place, so there was no way to connect the basements of both houses.

Twenty, thirty, forty people, maybe even more in a shelter that has room for up to a maximum of about fifteen inhabitants of one house . . . not room enough . . . but everyone feels relief that there are no bombs falling anymore, no sounds of airplanes. If only they don't come back! But then, suddenly, some men come in from the outside - soldiers, . . . or are they policemen(?) .

"Everybody out of here!" One of them shouts: "Do you want to 'kick the buckets like rats? - - - All of you will die from lack of oxygen down here. Out, all of you! Don't think! Don't argue! There is no choice . . . no alternative but out of here or die" . . . "But if the allied planes come again?!" "Shut up! Forget it!... Out now! . . . Go!"

Obediently, we climb the stairs from our basement, and all the people who had come together in our shelter now huddle within the hallway of our house. The front door, which opens from the hallway to the street, has two windows in the upper half of each of its wings. Only the wrought iron grid of the barred window is left, no glass. What I have never seen before, glowing particles, are coming in, showers of fiery sparks spraying, scattering, more and more widespread, blown in by the wind, . . . no, by a storm. Only this wooden door with two open windows in its upper half protects us from hell. Outside of those openings, the air is red, not from light reflection. No, there is fire in the air. The air is filled with fire!

The incredible heat, rising up from many burning

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houses, is sucked into the streets which function like chimneys, creating a frantic storm that tears in ever increasing speed, sparks of fire along: an inferno, building itself up with crazy velocity.

The air is on fire. The air is storm, one firestorm. And inside the hallway of our house are standing, tightly crammed together, forty, fifty people, or even more(?). And between them are these military men, shouting: "Out!" Pushing! Forcing people to run into the firestorm outside. "Go! Run through it or die! . . . you must go!"

There is Heini Koch, standing a few steps above on the staircase leading to our apartment. "I have been up there. I had left my wallet with identity papers and everything on the table . . . The fire from the next house is about to spread. It was hard to get in . . . smoke and heat . . . " "Our bathtub is full of water," I try to make myself heard, "even if the water pipes are not functioning, we could still fight the fire. . . , at least try to put it out...!"

I am trembling, and my knees are knocking. There is no power in my speech. Still, I have been instructed to be one of the firefighters of the house, responsible for extinguishing fire which might result from incendiary bombs. Following what I was taught in a class for air raid firefighters, I have taken care of installing buckets with sand, and other firefighting equipment all over the house.

I had been proud of being given this responsibility, and was determined to fulfill my duty, whenever an occasion would arise. Now there is the occasion! "No way!" Heini Koch is insisting. "There is no way we could possibly succeed in extinguishing this fire!" Despite my trembling knees, I try to make my way past him, up the stairs. "No way!" He is stronger than I am. Somehow I am grateful at that moment, not to have to go up there.

But for weeks months, if I should not have tried at least, years thereafter I wonder if I had failed. My mother takes the initiative, gets our family of four together, draws us back into the basement, down the steps into the dark. She has a candle, and with this little bit of light we find the door to the storage area in the basement that belongs to our apartment. We used to store coal for heating purposes there, potatoes and apples to stock for the winter, and a few suitcases with items valuable enough to be saved in case the house might be destroyed by bombs. There is a water pipe with a little faucet. We open the valve, and find out: yes, the water is still running! Again, there I am with my suggestions, "If we would work together with a bucket chain, we could probably bring enough water upstairs so that we might be able to put out the fire". "Absolutely not!" My mother agrees with Heini, and deep inside something of me is grateful that I can tell myself: "I have to obey, . . . it's not my responsibility. Is it really not?" - - - Our house will burn that night, down to the ground.

In suitcases stored in the basement, my mother has packed some sets of bedclothes in case we need them. Now we are glad to have the linen sheets. We unfold them, and make them dripping wet with water from our little faucet. We climb back upstairs into the hallway, which is still crowded with people who hesitate to risk dashing through the firestorm which is raging more fiercely every minute. The "Koenigsplatz" (King's Place), a huge round place in the middle of our city, is only one block down the street. We wrap ourselves in the wet sheets. "Your hair must be covered," I hear my mother say. "Let's stay close together!"

When we step out of that door, I feel as if I'll be blown away. But there are some men who left the house at the same time with us. I have no idea who they are. I

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feel my arm grasped, and I'm more torn than guided along. Only twenty, thirty steps down the street is the 'Koenigsplatz' where, during normal weekdays people used to buy and sell fresh vegetables and fruit from the country side. I find my mother and my sister, our friend Heini, and some other people from our house, crowded together underneath a tree that still has some of its leaves, although it is the end of October. We are the only ones who have wet sheets wrapped around us. Everyone else made it through the firestorm without such protection. Some have their clothes scorched, brows and hair burned. But all have survived so far.

Around the place there are huge buildings, some of them on fire, some only starting to burn. One of the most famous Baroque houses of our town, valued as an ancient monument, is on the corner next to us. It is still undamaged, but in the drugstore in the lower level there is fire, creeping its way forward. Kassel's Main Post Office, a huge building in dark red sand-stone, is still not touched by fire. Will it endure this night? (No, it did not....!)

The round 'Koenigsplatz' is divided into two halves by the tracks of a tramway which crosses the place diagonally, and has its stopping point for both directions in the middle of the place, marked accordingly by sign boards. Two tramway trains, one in each direction, are standing there without power, obviously still on the spot where they were when the air raid warning made them halt. The wires from which they used to be provided with electricity, are hanging from broken poles.

The 'Koenigsstrasse' (King's Street), is dividing the 'Koenigsplatz' into two halves. In the direction to the west it is called 'Upper King's Street', to the east 'Lower King's Street'. During the night of October 22nd, 1943, this street becomes the dividing line between life and

death. The side where I stand with my family under a tree, protected against flying sparks of fire by wet sheets wrapped around our bodies, is the north side where most people survive.

On the south side, beyond the line, marked by empty cars of the tramway, extended toward the Fulda River, is the old part of the city, consisting of ancient half timbered houses, burning like fodder. An old church, about the only stone building in this neighborhood, is destroyed, and heaps of heavy squared sandstone are blocking the one street where people might have been able to flee from the flames.

While we are standing there, watching the many fires around us, we hear screams, again and again: urgent, desperate cries of anguish and utter pain. How can we possibly help? Nobody even tries to move beyond the borderline, marked by 'King's Street' and its tramcars. Everyone seems to be paralyzed, in total shock. A strange kind of trance makes any kind of activity appear to be useless.

Only after a few days, when the still smoking ashes began to cool down, it was learned that nearly all the people who had dwelled in that oldest district of Kassel had died. Among them were three school mates of mine. Most bodies were found in air raid shelters in the basements. There had been no chance for them to get out, because the exits and escape hatches of their houses were blocked by rubble. Smoke had seeped in and the amount of carbon dioxide in the air rose inside to a level above what is tolerable for human beings to survive. Dead bodies were found stiffened in the position in which they had died, some of them peacefully sitting on their chairs, as if they had just fallen asleep.

The ones who suffered most may have been those who escaped from their houses into the streets,

and tried to flee the fiery inferno. Intense heat evaporated continually from the numerous sources of blaze, as they spread over the whole city. A tremendous storm, which was totally beyond any means of control, was stirred up. The gigantic, widespread fire put all firestations and fire brigades out of action.

While rescue operations and clearance work proceeded, corpses were laid in rows on the ground - - one next to the other - - just as they had been found, some of them with arms outstretched into the air, legs bent from the sitting position. Passing by, one might think, "How easily it could have been myself, laying there: Why this person, and not me ?" - - - Those determined, experienced men who had driven us out of our shelter with strict directions, had actually prevented us from dying in the basement of our house from lack of oxygen.

What relief, to be safe for the time being after dashing through that tunnel of hell!

While I stand, close to my mother and my sister, huddled together with neighbors and strangers underneath a tree, there is time to let my thoughts wander. Strangely enough, and not at all appropriate to this night's deadly horror, I remember the lowest drawer in my desk, where I used to store papers and projects which I wanted to complete at a later point in time, and I also see in front of me that corner in my wardrobe which was not in perfect order. I had kept postponing the cleanup work from one day to the next. Now I am relieved about the fact that my clutter is gone. "How can I feel this way, while our house and the whole town is burning down ?" I keep asking myself. But the more I try to push those thoughts away, the stronger they become. In some way it is a comfort, helping me to get through the ordeal of this night.

We are still wrapped in our sheets while they

slowly dry out. The heat around us is increasing, since the fire spreads from one house to the other. There is no way to extinguish it. Somebody says: "If all the buildings around this place are burning, the heat can grow to such an extent that we will be roasted alive if we stay any longer in this spot. We must make our way along the 'Upper King's Street' to the 'Friedrichsplatz' !" The suggestion seems to be reasonable. My mother, my sister, our friend Heini, and I hold on to each other's hands in order not to get lost. We join a group of people, who go together, helping each other to climb across huge heaps of stones from destroyed buildings and to step over wires which had provided the electrical supply for the trams, now hanging down, blocking our way. The houses are destroyed by air mines, but this street is broad enough so that fresh air flows in.

Finally, we reach the 'Friedrichsplatz'. This rectangular place, has a dimension of about four acres. With the monument of Frederick II, Landgrave of Hesse, in the middle, this place is representative of Kassel. The two historic castles on its east side, one beside the other, are called the Red and the White Palace, the latter at that time housing the Provincial Library (Nowadays, after reconstruction, it is harboring a great exhibition of modern art, called 'Documenta'). On its north and west side big business houses are built around the place, while the south side is open toward a huge park district, called the 'Karlsaue', ranging down into the Fulda River. From below blows fresh, cool air. Many frightened people, after escaping this night's horror, find refuge here.

The wide view southwards is only limited by Kassel's famous public theater, erected right in the middle, in front of the park. When we get there, the theater is hardly damaged. Only a little haze of smoke seems to

come from one of its side-aisles. Some hundred people are standing around in groups. I approach one group and ask, "Couldn't we organize a bucket-chain, up from the Fulda River to the theater?" What I get as an answer is only shrugging shoulders and pitiful smiles.

Still, I don't want to give up. "See all those people on the Friedrichsplatz', standing around, freezing? It would do them good, if they could do something, and the theater would be saved!" The only answer I get is, "What is a theater worth during times like this?!" - - - "For me a lot!" But I can not make myself heard. (The Provincial Library in the White Palace and some of the private houses around the 'Friedrichsplatz' might as well have had a chance to be saved, at least partially, if there would have been water and initiative of the people. But obviously everybody had given up all hope.)

I shiver in the cold of the night. We huddle close together. My mother opens her little suitcase. Out comes that half of the sausage, which our drummer, Heini, had bestowed on us right at the minute when that night's disaster began. Yes, I am hungry. This half of a sausage is the only edible item that is available, and we divide it into four pieces.

Yes, Heini is still with us. He does not say much. He is a quiet, modest man, but his presence has been comforting to us during this night. Together with his wallet he had left his own half of the sausage on our dining table. Only now he tells us, that he had not been able to get there, when he climbed up the staircase to our apartment after the bombing was over. The fire had already progressed too far. At least one eighth of the sausage he had shared so freely is now his. "Thanks, Heini Koch!"

We step closer to one of the burning houses. We stretch our hands close to the fire, and warm ourselves

up. It feels good. Watching the flames, I wonder how far the fire may have progressed in the place which has been our home, and, in my imagination, I see the flames - beside everything else - - eating up all of my clutter and unfinished work. And I keep wondering, what is the matter with me, that my little bit of mess occupies so much of my attention, while most valuable treasures are lost forever?!

Later on, when I talked to a friend about this experience, she said: "Our mind seems to trick us in emergencies like this. - - - Scary, how limited your thinking can become in sight of utter tragedy, when we are not able to comprehend the immensity of what is happening!"

One of my classmates who survived the 1943 air raid in another district of Kassel lives now in New York, NY. When I told her on the phone that I am trying to put my memories of the inferno into writing, she responded by sending me some photos which were made in Kassel before and after that specific air raid. She included a copy of the German government communique of October 23rd, 1943, which reported the destruction of Kassel and the losses of the civilian population, but also mentioned the obliteration of forty-eight heavy bombers.

According to my friend's information, the air raid of October 22, 1943, was an attack by British bombers, meant as revenge for the destruction of Coventry, England, inflicted by the German Airforce.

As a child I heard Adolf Hitler threaten in one of his speeches over the radio : "We will erase their cities!" I could not imagine what that meant and saw in front of me, in my mind, a map and an eraser. "Is it possible," I wondered, "to erase a town without destroying the map?" What had been destroyed by World War II can not be counted by numbers.

THE FOUR DAY POEM

Eddie Crestwood

Lately I Find That I Can
Draw Trees Really Good

596 Days left in this city
I grew up here but I cannot stay
And I have beliefs but I cannot say
because I do not remember them anymore
and anymore I do not even pray
But I can still die, that I will say
we live in a world we cannot stay
596 days left in this city

So I try to quit smoking
but I do not know why
I feel like smoking
I feel like lying
And it gets hard to remember these things I forget
When deep inside all I crave is another cigarette
I wish to yell at non smokers
“BREATHING MAKES YOU LIVING!!!!”
when non smokers say
“Smoking Makes YOU Dying!”
I feel like smoking
I feel like lying
And I do not know why
I keep trying to quit smoking

And I am annoyed by all you angry young poet men
I may be one of you
But you see I quit writing again
So what's a boy to do
As I sit amongst your yellow teeth
with my uncombed hair and crooked eyes full of stars

Indians, liars, and shoeless feet
and dreamers and writers are all that we are
I read my old writings and laugh
I HATE EXCLAMATION POINTS
I hate this art
of writing
of lying
of lying about writing and art
but it is hard to quit
the things in your heart
So I carry on
Carry on writing
Carry on smoking
Carry on lying
"Carry on Johnny,

One day you'll grow up"

And realize I carry on dying
Living to die and nothing to lose
Except virginities and memories and clues
as to what is our surroundings
these earthly boundings
will only hold us so long

As death is inevitable
Man is not immortal
but will one day surely die
and nothing lasts forever
especially those things I was supposed to remember
those that I promised my heart I would never forget
About this life I lead
this life I love
but the forget I regret

As I crawl about trying to collect all I've forgotten
I come upon philosophy
Metaphysics met with epistemology

Voices from the Valley

Plato wrote of Socrates

And ignorance in justice of human mistakes

And if I ever met Socrates

I'd hit him in the face

So place me on your list of ignorance
for old refuting men I hold no patience

And I even get annoyed
at the mention of Frued

because I am an ex soft determinist

A wanna be existentialist

But mostly I find

That I AM Full Of Shit

So heaven help us, Satan please us

Though I am fascinated with Jesus

I stopped believing in "God"

And Christ like Symbollics

Raging alcoholics

writing more useless stories

I TOO WRITE USELESS STORIES

But what's a boy to do

When the countdown is at 592

And I guess I will never understand

Plato or my own disabilities

to make clear my beliefs

And I've forgotten the constellations
and all religious creeds

And I don't remember the Civil War

Or the birth date of my niece

And I don't recall the Elenchus

or Socrates

or my mother's maiden name

but at least I can draw trees.....

.....AT LEAST I CAN DRAW TREES

God's Helper

To my special love--Josh

Anxiety risen spirits,
Vigorously pulse through my leaf-like veins.
As bobbed apples build up in my throat,
Suffocating the order of thought.
The chaos can be labeled black and white,
As overwhelming fear--
And entanglement of uncertainties.
I nap my blood-soaked eyes,
Upon your warm heart,
And wrap myself in your sanctuary arms.
This is my rock,
The one fellow empathizers--
Speak of crawling under.
Your winged arms blanket me,
And these anxious spirits subside.
I'd lose myself in this nexus creation,
But one must face--
This fire-breathing dragon,
I'm just thankful--
I don't have to alone.

Janel Benham

Heat

You taught your children
about heat. Even as they slept
in cool beds, you were getting ready
to set off in the still-dark mornings.
Your body already in anticipation
of the heat that would rape it.

You think we didn't know, but we did.
I always knew what it was like.
I saw your hands, torn by machines,
and I could almost forgive those hands
all that they had done, I could almost love them.

Didn't we put you back together again, Father,
after the machines curled and flattened you
like metal, separated you into nuts and screws?
It wasn't good enough, but our hands were
too small and the job kept needing to be done.

We washed your heat-soaked clothes
each night, Father, wringing them out
into pails we carried up the side of the mountain.
Up and down, all night long
Until one side of the mountain was razed
by heat, until we could finally sleep
on the side that was clean.

Carrie Nelson



“Moving Day”
Betsy Zibas

*The light shines so brightly,
As I sit here in the dark,
I am surrounded by the shadows
of lovers.
Frantically struggling to
keep their relationships alive.
I'm alone, but I don't cry
out of self pity.
I cry for the souls lost in each others eyes..
They try too hard to impress
each other.
The truth is smothered..
I sit and laugh now.
I'm in my empty home,
I'm glad that I'm alone.....*

Jeremy Fox

Devotion

(for Vance)

*I love the smell of rooms
where you have been
where you have stood
and the foreign touch of things
I never realized until
you came along*

*Often I have the feeling that
I am not alone in a room
I always turn around*

*Oh Catherine, help me to understand
this wild thing
I think of you now
kneeling in a roman town
praying for grace to descend
humbling yourself
to the greater glory above*

*Like yourself
I cannot think with my head anymore
but with my heart
for I have left my mind
and put on love*

Betsy Zibas

Noble Deeds

All mortals will leave this earth one day;
But this world will carry on merry and gay.

Palaces or slums with us will not go along;
Of dust we are to dust we shall belong.

Why not o'mortal commit such a noble deed;
That will help humans everywhere in need?

Plant a tree that gives comfort, provides shade;
To every weary traveler who this-ward made.

Its fruit shall alleviate hunger to an extent;
This noble task should be our main intent.

Just as we have always enjoyed the fruit;
Of the labors of those that are our root.

One should build a bridge, that people may utilize;
To reach other shores, their dreams to realize.

The paths, the footsteps that led us to our goal;
Are our forefathers' sacrifices, their giving role.

O'Kanwal this noble cycle must continue;
Leave behind more than what was entrusted with you.

Prof. Kanwal Prashar

ایک دن آئے گا اپنا یام نہیں پوچھے یہاں
کہ کسی افتاد سے چلتا ہے گا یہ جیسا ہے -
کیا محلہ کیا جسونہری سب یہی یہیں دھجاشیں ہے
میں کے تھکنیں ہیں کہ سماں یہیں دھجاشیں ہے -
لیوں نہ پھر پوچھا یہاں ہر دھلداشیں، اے فانی بتر
یہوں بھلے پر گھن کا جس، سیم جلیں، ایسی ڈھنے
اک شہر ایسا لایاں جسیں جس کے سائے کے لئے
پر قضا اخدا مسافر تازہ دم پوکر جلے -
اکر جس کے پھل میادیں میر کی کھوکھی کوک
کیے اچھے کرم ہے انسان مت جانا تو چوک -
یہم بھی تو اچھے بزرگوں کے لفڑی ہیٹر سے
توڑ گرھا تھے دریے ہیں پھل مزے سے دیرے -
ایک پھل ایسا بانا نہیں کے ذریعے ہر کوئی
پار سر وادی ترے کا در پاش ہر منزل کھوئی -
یہم نے پھر تھم لیئے آساز، دشکل دستے
اک دھن نہ دیر قربا اپیار، تب پہنچا رہنے
اے کنول کوک ایسے یہی چلتا ہے پر سلسلہ
اُس سے زیادہ تپڑھا پھر جو عین دستے ہیں

کنوں پر دش کر کر

1998

Nek Karam (Noble deeds)

Ek din aaye gaa aisa, hum naheen hon gay yahaan,
Per isi raftaar say chaltaa rahay gaa yeh jahaan.

Kyaa mahal kyaa jhoondi, sub hee yaheen reh jaayen gay,
Mittee kay putlay hayen hum sub khaak mayen mil jaayen gay.

Kyoon naa phir kuchh aisa kar dikhlaeñ aye faani bashar,
Ho bhalaa her gun kaa jis say hum chalein aisee dagar.

Ik shajar aisa Lagaaeñ jis kay saaye kay talay,
Her thakaa haaraa musafir taazaa dum ho kar chalay.

Aur jis kay phal mitaa dayen her kisi bhookay ki bhook,
Aisay achhay karam say insaan mut jaanaa tu chook.

Hum bhi to apnay bazurgon kay lagaaye paed say,
Tod kar khaatay rahay haeñ phal mazay say daer say.

Ek pul aisa banaanaa jis kay zariye her koi,
Paar her waadi karay aur paaye her manzil kholi.

Hum nay yeh jo teh kiye aasaan-o-mushkil raastay,
Auroñ nay deen qurbaaniyaan tub yeh kaheen jaa kar banay.

Aye 'Kaiwal' kuchh aisy hee chaltaa rahay yeh silsilaa,
Oos say ziaadaa chhod jaayen jo hamayeñ rub say milaa.

With Mother, watching t. v. on a Saturday night

At twenty-five, I can finally need you again.
We lay on my bed, curved together,
Me on the inside, pink and fleshy
You on the outside, curiously smaller,
brown, glossy, harder
but with just enough give.

It is only in your arms, Mother,
smelling of Icy Hot and cocoa butter,
that I can rest. My mind kept running
and running until it looped up on itself,
burned out. Exhaustion led me here,
where I always needed to be.

Too tired to speak, to twist my tongue
around riddles without answers.
I sleep and dream you
the way you are in an old picture:
in the middle of a Texas field,
barefoot and smiling
a baby slung on your saronged hip
and a spotted brown mare
gently edging out of range.

Carrie Nelson

Blathelete

took no side in the Heavenly war of angels
I enjoy all sporting events,
swimming and bi-king alike.

yet the athletes say I don't exist.

so I stand at the gates,
admission paid,
neither in nor out.

consoled solely by the belief that declaration of preference
serves no purpose other than
limiting a limitless database,
deselecting names and assorted body parts,
desperately clamoring
in order to bring order to the inordinate

Amy Gilgan

The Wishing Tree

Lori Tremaine

*The wishing tree, where a little girl
with ponytails and a tiny curl,
can dream and play her days away
until her mother calls to say
that soon her special time must end;
the make-believe with her wishing friend.*

*The wishing tree, with arms spread wide
inviting all to come inside
to find a perch among the boughs
where special friends recite their vows
to never let a secret go
to anyone who shouldn't know.*

*The wishing tree, a sturdy perch,
the perfect place in which to search
for treasures rare, and creatures small
allowing one to keep them all,
so lovingly found and tucked away
to be shone-off another day.*

*The wishing tree, in all its glory
will forever keep the private story
of a handsome prince and a princess fair
on a fine white horse in the Land of Zare.*

*The wishing tree, caressed and hugged
and whispered to, while branches tugged
and pulled away to an unseen spot
where soon their shape will be forgot
and all this due to one quick flash
that forever left a mighty gash.*

*The wishing tree, the patient now,
that had survived the storm somehow,
with gauze and tape on broken branch
and band-aids, for a better chance
of feeling better really quick;
the bedtime story did the trick!*

*The wishing tree, all cracked and worn,
its branches blown and sometimes torn,
the stump of a limb now long since gone
is just the right height to put a foot upon
to give the very needed boost
that starts the journey to the roost
where one becomes the secret spy
to peek at all who wonder by!*

*The wishing tree, the perfect spot
to hide in when the plan had not
turned out the way it had been set
and expectations were not met,
where tears could wash the day away;
for this sturdy friend would never sway.*

*The wishing tree, who never tells
when two young lovers weave their spells
of new romance, of soft embrace
that causes nervous hearts to race
until the moment comes to this;
the splendor of young loves first kiss!*

*The wishing tree, much older now
its secrets kept inside somehow,
it stands alone beside the pond
reflecting back with memories fond,
as the two young lovers, now rich with years
embrace the spot without the fears
of letting out the secret whims
that came to life beneath the limbs.*

*The wishing tree, as the end draws near,
will forever shade the couple here,
will protect and mark their resting place,
but never will forget the face
of the little girl who climbed so high,
and never wanted to say Good-bye.*

The Hand of God

Richard Eichman

**The thick man puts his hand on
My shoulder as we roll through
The halls. It is my favorite
Ride--laying down tied up.
I feel like a bullet just before being shot.
"It's almost over," he says.
"I know, and you're doing fine,"
I tell him. He seems to feel better.**

**The pink room. It reminds me
Of Valentine's Day and chocolate.
The thick man has brought friends;
Maybe we'll have a party. I love parties.**

**"How are you?" she asks. She is young
And pretty--fresh human--not like
Me. Her voice trembles, and it reminds
Me some of the thick man. "You're
Lovely," I tell her, "maybe we can go
Out after the party." Silence. I hate
Silence. I guess she doesn't like me
That much.**

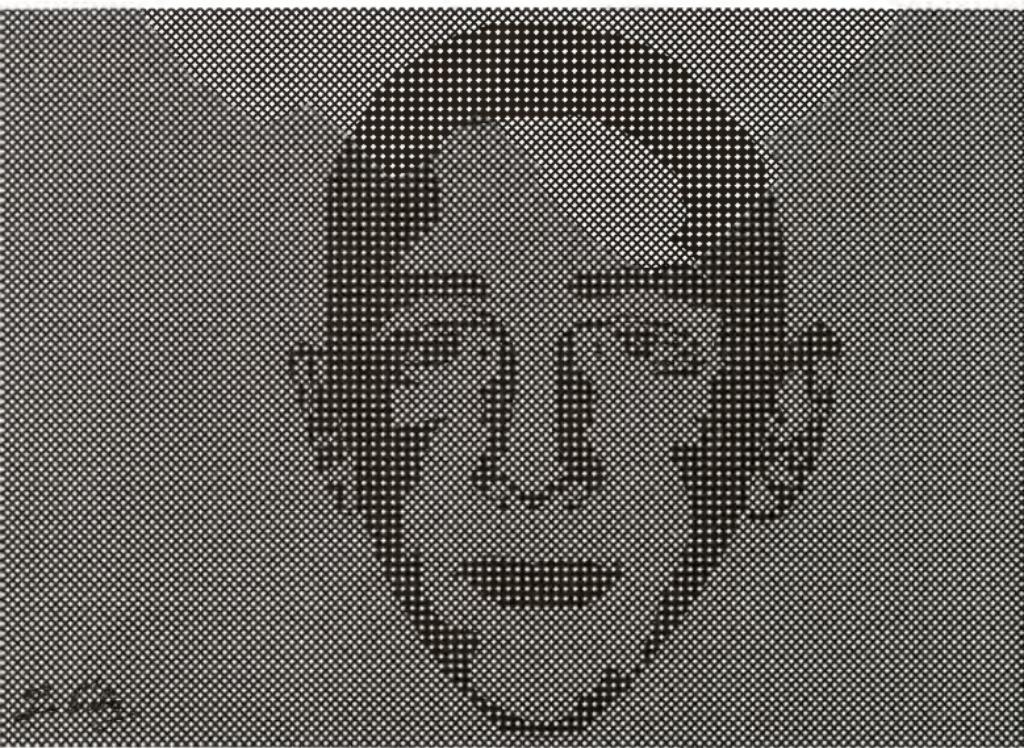
**An ant bites my arm, and I melt
Into my grave. My pretty pink room
Seems white--like being bathed
In warm milk. It's very soothing.**

**She puts something in my mouth.
It tastes bad, but I can't spit
It out. As she moves away, a
Tear falls on my forehead.
I am anointed.
I hear a click, and God's hand
Comes out of the ceiling and rests on
The tear. I feel the power.**

**Life enters my body a-new. Every
Sinew and muscle lurches
To receive the gift. For a second
The pain stops.**

**I feel the wind and sun on my
Face. Trees and a lake come into
View. It is the peace I
Knew would come. A breath of
Cold air carries me back to the
Thick man and her. Her make-up
Has run. I guess the thick man
Said something mean. He should be nicer.**

**The thick man pushes me through the
Halls again. It feels like
Flying. I love flying. Soon, maybe
I can touch the hand of God again.**



Untitled
Bryan Wobig

INFLUENCED NEEDLES HURT

**Fat women want to be thin,
Skinny women think they can rule the world.
What is it?
Are we drinking from the fountain of society?
Do we let the TV ghosts haunt us
Until we are to the point of puking over the toilet
Or taking pills cause we feel bad about ourselves
And the way others look at us?
It makes me sick
But models inject the shit into our veins
With needles of Cosmopolitan, Seventeen and YM.
Society sets the trap
And us, the experimental rats
Go for the new delicious cheese.
Why?
Because we think they are angels God gave us
With their heavenly bodies.
We eat garbage we don't even like,
Do daily rituals working our bodies past exhaustion
Just to lose a pound here or there
Because we are like peasants copying the queen.**

Josh Martin

Childhood Encounter With Anti-Semitism in Germany 1938

Val Sudmeyer

More than half a century has passed, since six million Jews were murdered in Europe, due to the influence of the German National Socialistic (Nazi) government. How could this happen? - - - Nobody admitted to have been involved in the extermination process. Whoever was called to account, shrugged it off, insisting "I had nothing to do with it." No one seemed to be responsible. Even those Germans, who obviously had an alert mind and took active interest in politics, claimed not to have known what was going on in the concentration camps. This brought me to the point to ask myself: "What did I know?"

I grew up in Germany during World War II, and though I was too young to understand what anti-Semitism was about, I noticed clearly that something was wrong. What did I realize? Even after so long a time, this question is worth asking since it might help to see how human beings can deteriorate into a behavior where wrongdoing is no longer recognized as something bad. Before unthinkable cruelty finally considered to be normal, subtle roots grow, not only in beastly criminals or brutal executioners but in friendly people who are normally kind, warmhearted and likable.

I was eleven years old in 1938, when I first realized that Jews were a special group of human beings. From one day to the next, according to National Socialistic law, all Jews had to indicate their identity by a label, showing the Star of David in black lines on yellow background. This patch, about four by four inches in size, was made out of cotton. Sewn on the coat or what-

ever garment a person wore, it was at all times conspicuous.

I watched and tried to learn what was so special about the people who were classified as Jews. With one of my classmates, I had studied a magazine, called "Der Stuermer" (The Assailant). The caricature drawings, which appeared in endless variations on its pages, were supposed to show the characteristic features of Jews. I watched people with the star sign, whom I met on the street, in order to figure out if any of them had hooked noses and/or flat feet as those figures in the cartoons, but I found no similarities. Still, the 'star bearers' of those days were different from other citizens. They looked frightened, shy and nervous. They did not dare to look straight into one's eyes. No wonder! They were marked as outcasts.

I was probably not the only one who watched them in connection with those cartoons and jokes by which they were labeled as 'the arch-enemies of all Germans'. They were accused, for example, of taking advantage of poor German people who had borrowed Jewish money with maximum interest rates, and who found their houses and their land confiscated if loans were not paid back in due time. Since I could not find that all Jews had hooked noses or flat feet, and because I could not smell the garlic they were supposedly eating excessively, I wondered if the other things that were said about them could be true.

Jews received smaller quantities of groceries than Germans. If they got caught without wearing the yellow star, they were deprived of food stamps that would have enabled them to buy what they needed to survive. There were only certain stores where they were allowed to shop at specified times. All German retail

Voices from the Valley

businesses had to put signs, printed in black letters on white background on the entrance doors of their shops which said: "Jews not wanted" or "German Business", implying that no Jew was supposed to enter a shop that was owned by Germans. Before long there were no Jewish businesses existing in Germany. I still envision those labels. They were about three inches high and fifteen inches wide, a red square with the black swastika in a white circle on the left side.

The year 1938 was most memorable for me because my mother's youngest brother, who was my godfather, came with his wife from Argentina and stayed with us for a few weeks. His name was August, and we called him Uncle Gustel. He had lived for a decade in South America, but was emotionally still very attached to Germany.

Aunt Chila, his wife, was from Spanish Basque descent. She spoke only a few words of German, but was much in favor of the National Socialistic Party. Somehow she had come into possession of a couple of these badges which shopowners were supposed to put on their doors in order to keep Jews away. She could hardly stop laughing when she tried to explain to us for what purpose she wanted to take those labels home. "When we have guests next time in our house in Buenos Aires," Uncle Gustel interpreted what she had said: "Chila will put one of these signs on our garden entrance to prevent Jews from coming! . . . It's a joke, of course, since there are no Jews who could get the idea of joining one of our parties. Nobody likes them over there. Our guests will enjoy this label!"

A few days later, Uncle Gustel and Aunt Chila had to leave for South America. My uncle was in a sorrowful mood. "Who knows, if I will see all of you again?"

He worried especially about his mother, who was in her eighties, that she might not be alive anymore when he would come to Germany the next time. He could not know that he would see neither of his parents again, that one of his young nephews would die in the war to come, that he would lose his wife to cancer, and that he himself would spend more than six years in an internment camp. Was the severe sadness he felt during those days foreboding hardship, suffering and loss that would come upon us during the times of war ahead?

Both of them were sad, when Aunt Chila and Uncle Gustel left our house and had finally to say goodbye to us after those weeks of vacation. They went the few steps up the street, where their new car that they intended to take with them to South America was parked in front of the house next door. Their schedule was to drive with this car to Hamburg, and from there to sail on board of the "Patria" (a luxurious new ocean liner) to Buenos Aires.

When we came down to wave farewell, a crowd had gathered around the new car. We had no idea why. When Uncle Gustel and Aunt Chila had taken their seats and were about to start, one man jumped out of that crowd, shook his fist in rage against them and shouted, "Jews, out!" While they drove away, we stood stunned.

It took us a while, putting two and two together, to make sense of what had just happened. My uncle had parked his car in front of a neighbor's house, not knowing that this neighbor of ours was Jewish. Both my uncle and his wife had relatively big noses, and Aunt Chila with her deep black hair, a typical Basque woman, definitely did not look like a German. They had, of course, a lot of luggage crammed into their car. Putting all these details together the people in our street had come to the

Voices from the Valley

conclusion: Here is another Jewish couple leaving the country, taking a new car and much luggage with them. They did not check to see who these big nosed people were. Hate and jealousy brought about that mad, infuriated reaction.

What difference did it make, whether this was happening to Jews, who were about to leave their home or to a German patriot?

My uncle never forgot during his lifetime how he was dismissed by fellow Germans from his beloved hometown with a curse instead of a farewell.

The irony was that, in this case, blind hate was raging against those who themselves had been willing to put - - as a joke! - - the sign, "Jews not wanted" at their garden entrance. I will not say, "It hit the wrong people". No, probably - - although it was a matter of chance - - a wise destiny made these two think about what it meant to be not wanted, not wanted in a country that was home.

Only for a moment they experienced what it meant to be an outcast. They left Germany according to their own free will. They could go where they wished and take with them what they liked. But how many who had just as well considered themselves to be German citizens (even those who had fought as Germans during World War I) were forced to leave Germany against their will? Only if their decision to emigrate, was made in time, there was a chance for them, to escape from the impending 'Holocaust'. But not all countries accepted them as immigrants, and most Jews were not allowed to take their belongings with them. They lost everything.

Only after the war had ended, we learned, that six million Jewish people had lost their lives.

Born in 1927, I was a child during that time. My teacher at school, a lady whom I admired and loved, spoke about the "Endloesung", the 'final solution' of the Jew problem, and said that all Jews must be extinguished. It would be hard, but utter consequence would be absolutely necessary. I wondered what that meant.

Would I have done something if I had been older, to find out what was 'final' about the 'solution' the National Socialists had agreed upon? Would I have reacted differently than the German people who were adults at that time? Probably not, even though I regret deeply what has happened and feel with those who suffered.

I keep wondering how it was possible that human beings deteriorated into behavior patterns of wrongdoing so that unthinkable cruelty was finally considered to be normal. But was this not a continuation of human history reminding of the way it had begun with Cain and Abel?

Ignorance, jealousy, greed, and hate are roots from which evil forces sprout, that may develop independently from our first true intentions. Those forces can carry people away to do what they despise and normally would never do. My childhood story about my aunt and uncle from Argentina might enhance awareness.

We cannot change history or other people, but we can encounter evil forces in our own hearts: bitter roots that make us hard, judgmental and careless towards our neighbors. We must weed those roots out, if we can, before they grow strong. No one is doomed to be a victim. Although a single person cannot change history, we can influence the direction in which we are moving and take an active part to shape the future.



"In Honor of Christi Russell"
Seth Corey

LEVITATION

I LOOK DOWN,
SEE NO GROUND
BELOW WHERE I STAND.
WHOLE ON TOP OF NOTHING,
HOLDING MYSELF UP
WITH MY MASS OF TISSUE
WITHIN MY SKULL.
AND RAPE IS A HORRIBLE
THING.
ESPECIALLY
MENTALLY.
I LET YOU TELL ME I WAS
FALLING
AND YOU
WOULD
CATCH ME.
YOU FORGOT
TO MENTION
MY ABILITY TO
LEVITATE.

KElly Stolgren

The Other Way

In a certain sense, you are the only one who sees it. The boy looks at the picture and, perhaps wishing himself more there to be, says the worst thing he can think to say, "Yeah, Van Gogh saw it too."

You know that this is not the only way. Have you ever found words in a book that shouted at your having thought of them before? Have you ever played music in your mind to an audience of friends even as you heard it? Not this way.

The world is not your idea, but you are its. You do not think, but are thought.

Dieter Zeschke

VOS

En esta tierra que nos hace vivir,
Como es que entra la tendencia dividir?
En pensamiento partido de todo lo que es
Las semillas de la planta que todo destruye.

Pero en este mundo tenemos mas que lo que hay.
Una demencia mas aya del nas ya.
En la entention del individuo hacia el centro
De la expression que es mas profundo.

Cada dia vida nos da oportunidad de escojer.
Y con el movimiento la verdad aprender,
El pasado sin poder para esclavizar nos
Una eternidad nuevo poderoso dado vos.

VOICE

In this world that gives us life,
how is it that we tend to divide?
In thought that goes astray from all that is
The seeds of a plant that everything destroys.

But in this world there is more than all that is.
A demention further off than further off.
In extention of the individual towards the center
Of the expression of the deepset things.

Each day life gives us a way to choose.
And in this movement to understand the truth,
The past without the power to enslave us
A new eternity, powerful, given voice.

Thanksgiving 1997

Val Sudmeyer

See: Everything new, reconstructed ...!

But visit the graves where they are buried
who wanted to live, but were slaughtered

- why? -

Touch old wounds, feel
what has remained sore
- forever? -

Let us light our candles,
pray for forgiveness,
for healing --- !

Pray that the dam will not break again
so that waters of hate can rage,
and raise above our heads! 1

Be still --- ,
let us pause a while
in our effectiveness,
our noisy leisure.

Rest! Watch silence
and gratitude raise!
Become overwhelmed by thanksgiving!

Taste and smell what it means: peace ...
Peace in our own hearts, 2
peace for Jerusalem 3
and the world.

1 Jeremiah 6: 14

2 Colossians 3: 15

3 Psalm 122: 6

THERE IS A VITALITY, A LIFE-FORCE,
AN ENERGY, A QUICKENING THAT IS
TRANSLATED THROUGH YOU INTO
ACTION AND BECAUSE THERE IS
ONLY ONE OF YOU IN ALL OF TIME,
THIS EXPRESSION IS UNIQUE. IF
YOU BLOCK IT, IT WILL NEVER EXIST
THROUGH ANY OTHER MEDIUM AND
BE LOST. THE WORLD WILL NOT
HAVE IT.

-MARTHA GRAHAM



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The editorial policy of *Voices from the Valley: A Rock Valley College Journal of the Arts* is to accept for consideration traditional and experimental essays, reviews of film and drama, drawings, photographs, short fiction, poetry, and memoirs. The editorial staff of *Voices* handle and select materials in a confidential and professional fashion. Pseudonyms are accepted. Foreign language poetry is encouraged. Return of manuscripts or art work is ensured when an address is known. Contributors shall be compensated with a free copy of *Voices* in which their works appear.

If your daily life seems poor, do not blame it; blame yourself, tell yourself that you are not poet enough to call forth its riches; for to the creator there is no poverty and no poor indifferent place.

-Rainer Maria Rilke

Art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass.

-Walter Pate

Art distills sensations and embodies it with enhanced meaning.

-Jacques Barzun

Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes.
Art is knowing which ones to keep.

-Scott Adams

What is art but a way of seeing?
-Thomas Berler

Poetry is truth dwelling in beauty.
-Edgar Allan Poe

I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. It takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity.

-William Wordsworth

The pen is the tongue of

-Cervantes

How do I know what I think until I see what I say?

-E. M. Forster

Language is the mother, not the handmaiden of thought. Words tell you things you never thought before.

-W. H. Auden

Words are the most pow

Art is indeed not the bread

-Jean

Writing is a form of immortality.
-Dwight Oscar Boles

Fortuna,
a small but
a spiritual
interpret the
flesh.

(Writing